

FT MEADE
GenColl



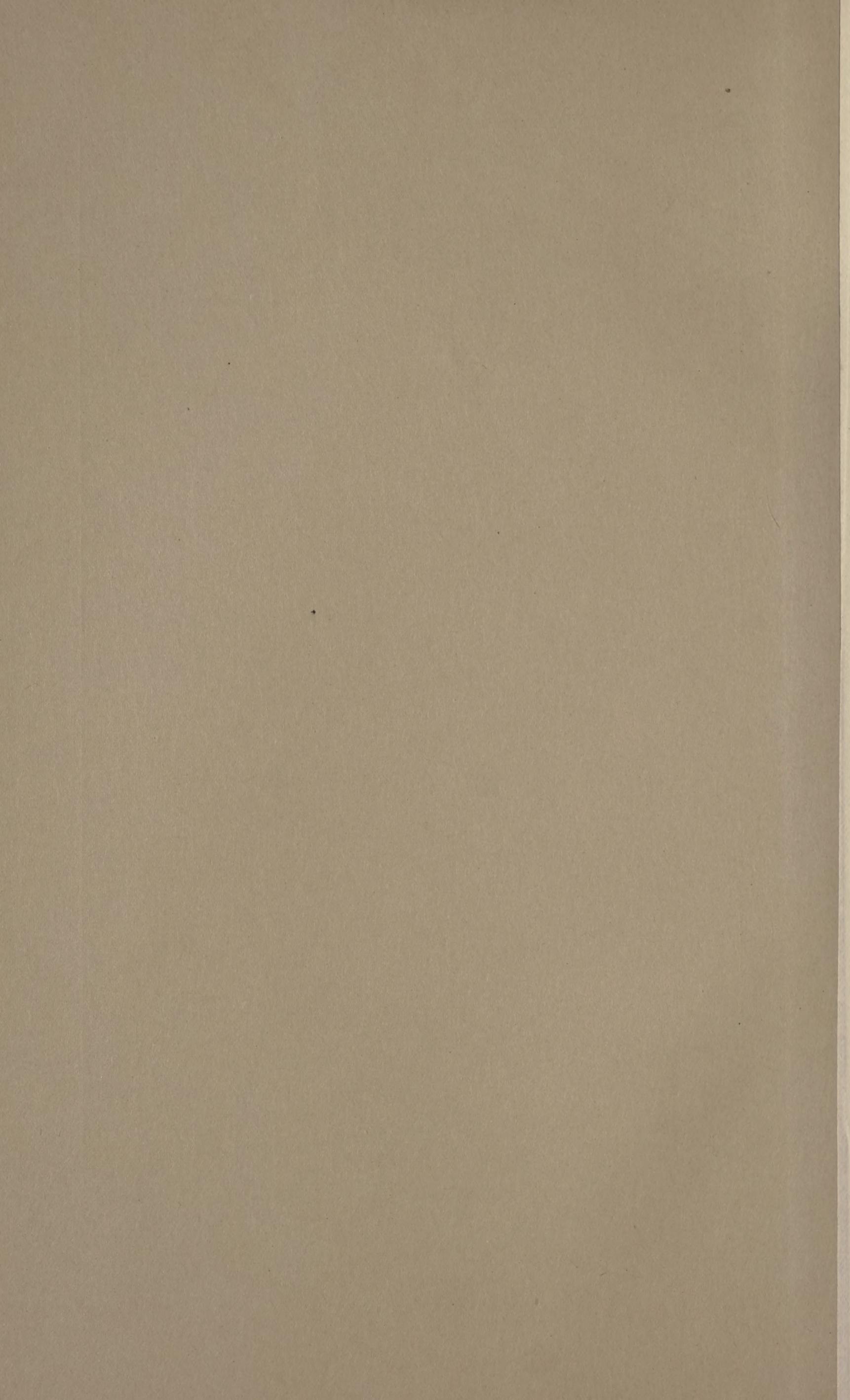
Class BS2555

Book 135
Copy 2

T H E
G O S P E L S

BY
A LAYMAN

Copy 2



2

262
1.990

THE GOSPELS
BY
A LAYMAN

THE GOSPELS

BY
A LAYMAN

Therardi Davis.

3 3 3
3 3 3
3 3 3
3 3 3

PRINTED AT
THE GILLISS PRESS
NEW YORK
1916

copy 2

BS2555
I 35
Copy 2

COPYRIGHT, 1916
BY
GHERARDI DAVIS

Transferred from
Librarian's Office.

SEP 28 1919

o c c c
c c c
x x x

TO MY FRIEND
EDWARD E. SPRAGUE
WITH WHOM
I HAVE HAD MANY INTERESTING TALKS
ON THE SUBJECT CONTAINED
IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES
GHERARDI DAVIS

NEW YORK
APRIL, 1916

THERE is nothing that will advance the cause of true religion among all the people more than the use and knowledge of Holy Scripture. The unchaining of the Bible and taking it out of the exclusive control of the Church; the trusting of it freely to the people, were the setting free of spiritual forces that have revolutionized human society. And now the day has come when scholarship and criticism of both the Old and New Testaments are not found exclusively among ecclesiastics and university professors, but in an increasing degree among the thoughtful laymen of all professions. The Church distrusted the wisdom of giving the Bible freely to the people; she is timid now when men are seeking to know the truth and the whole truth about God's word; she is anxiously asking what criticism and scholarship will do with the Bible. But we must always trust freedom; for we can do nothing against the truth but only for

the truth. Those devout laymen who bring their earnest and reasonable thought to this study, will bear witness to the power of God's word to cleanse and uplift and inspire their lives, and the life of the world. So let us rejoice in books like this.

W. M. G.

THE DEAN'S OFFICE
CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

NEW YORK, April 25, 1916.

OME years ago a friend, to whose sermons I listened with great interest while he was my rector—he has now been advanced to higher honors in the Episcopal Church—in answer to a question I put to him referred me to a well-known book on the history of the New Testament. I had for some time wondered why no preacher ever touched on many of the questions which came to my mind, as I listened in church to the reading of the Gospels, or as I read them myself; for, as others have no doubt done, I often wondered how those four books came to be written, who their authors really were, whence those authors derived their knowledge of the facts relating to our Saviour's life and the words He spoke, as they are recorded in the Gospels, when the Gospels were written, and many other like matters. Thus my interest in this subject grew, until from the book my friend referred me to I went on to others, equally interesting. Several of these

books were replete with Greek, Latin and Hebrew, and as I knew nothing of the latter language, and to my regret, had forgotten most of my Greek and Latin, I did not assume to question the deductions from, or the interpretations of, the originals made by students, and I was of course obliged to hold to the English text alone.

I soon found that I was reading a subject of extraordinary interest, and what, as a layman, I thus learned from studying the Gospels and the books on the New Testament, I have written down in the following pages, perhaps with too great brevity, but with deep reverence.

THE GOSPELS
BY
A LAYMAN

The Oldest of The Gospel Manuscripts

I SUPPOSE that every one who has read the Gospels at all carefully has observed how totally different the first three are from the fourth. Such a reader may have gone further and have noticed how much alike many passages are in the first three Gospels. No doubt, too, an attentive reader has often wondered how it was that only two of the Gospels bear the names of men who were of Christ's twelve chosen disciples, and who therefore were with Him during His ministry. It seems strange that the second Gospel should have been written by one who during Christ's ministry must have been a mere lad, and that the Gospel according to St. Luke is by one who does not even intimate that he ever saw our Saviour or heard Him speak. Again, it is evident to even a casual reader that not only is the sequence of events not the same in the several

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

Gospels, but that the Gospels do not at all contain the same matter. Thus, the Lord's Prayer, which is probably repeated more frequently than any other words of the New Testament, is to be found only in St. Matthew and St. Luke. The institution of the Lord's Supper, by the breaking of bread and partaking of wine, is not mentioned by St. John, whose account of the Last Supper is far more in detail in other respects than that contained in the other Gospels. The wonderful miracle of the Raising of Lazarus is told only by St. John, while the Ascension is told only by St. Mark and St. Luke, and it is a question whether this passage in St. Mark is genuine.

For convenience of reference, and as an aid to students, the Gospels have been printed in parallel columns, the same incidents being placed together, although their sequence in the several Gospels is by no means always the same. Such a book is known as a "Harmony of the Gospels," and the idea of a Harmony is not at all modern. If, now, this book is even only glanced over, it is impossible not to notice how very similar is the language of the first three Gospels, verse after verse at times being in almost the same words. In literature, when such similarity of language

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

appears in books by different authors on the same subject, the suggestion occurs that they either used an identical original or that one of the authors is the original of the others. And very early in Bible history search was made for the original from which the first three Gospels were drawn.

Before describing the result of this search, reference should be made to the manner in which the Gospels have been handed down to us. Of course, like all works written before printing was invented, they appear in manuscript form. Ancient manuscripts are on vellum or on papyrus. The latter, if removed to a damp climate, has usually rotted and been lost; the vellum has lasted for centuries. No matter how the original was written, whether by the author himself or by a scribe under his dictation, copies were made as a rule by dictation to a body of scribes, just as, when I was a law clerk, before the days of type-writing machines, we clerks would be gathered together in a room to make copies of a paper from dictation, where they were needed in a hurry. Manuscripts written without punctuation and in letters all of the same size, with no distinction between capitals and other letters, are called “uncial” manuscripts, and the oldest and most

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

perfect Gospel manuscripts, three in number, are of this character. They are:

(1) The **CODEX VATICANUS GRAECUS**, which has been in the Vatican Library in Rome since 1481, at least. It was written in the fourth century and is, like the others, in Greek and on vellum

(2) The **CODEX SINAITICUS**, discovered in a monastery on Mount Sinai, and now at Petrograd. It is considered certain that it was at Caesarea in the seventh century, it having been written in the fourth century, but later than the Codex Vaticanus.

(3) The **CODEX ALEXANDRINUS** of the fifth century, now in the British Museum.

There are pieces of an older third century manuscript, partly in London, partly in Philadelphia, but it is very fragmentary.

Last winter several sheets of the **CODEX VATICANUS**, if I remember correctly, were to be seen in photographic reproduction at the Public Library. A very ingenious method of photographing manuscripts has been invented, and they can be had in reproduction quite readily. The three Codices referred to are the great authorities for the New Testament text, and they are very much nearer the time when the authors of the New

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

Testament lived than are the manuscripts of the works of many an ancient author.

In the early days, the Gospels were not always placed in the same order. St. Matthew appears to have always been first, but, while in the Eastern Church the sequence was like that to which we are accustomed, in the Western Church St. John usually followed St. Matthew.

These old texts of the Gospels have been studied as few, if any, other books; similarity of style and composition have been gone over with the greatest care; even the use of words has been studied. And this has been done with all the more care from a literary point of view, because the three first Gospels are unique in this, that, written at about the same time, they each describe the life and teachings of the same person. There is no parallel to this in ancient literature.

The Gospels, it will be noticed, have been preserved just as any other ancient writings—like the works of Homer, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Plato, Caesar, Cicero, Horace, Virgil, and all the others, of the genuineness of which there is no doubt; and I cannot conceive of any honest question being raised against the genuineness of the Gospels.

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

The three first Gospels are known as the Synoptic Gospels, because, combined, they present a general and harmonized view of Christ's life.

The Gospel according to St. Mark

THE Gospel according to St. Mark is universally considered the oldest of all four Gospels. Mark, it will be remembered, was the companion of Paul and Barnabas, over whom a serious dispute arose, as is recounted in Acts (XV. 37, 38). Mark is referred to in various Epistles and in Acts, and in I. Peter (V. 13), St. Peter calls him, "Marcus, my son." He was with St. Peter in Rome, and Papias (a Bishop of Hierapolis, and a Christian writer of the second century) says that Mark wrote down what he heard from Peter. That is, Mark must have taken down Christ's life and words from Peter's dictation, or have written down from what he heard Peter preach, a story of Christ's life and His words. It is asserted with great ingenuity that the present Gospel is made up of an original work by Mark, which has been edited, as we would say today, by another person. But with equal skill, it is

THE GOSPELS— BY A LAYMAN

shown that the Gospel is a homogeneous work and hence original. I am inclined to believe that it is by the hand of St. Mark, even if it is an elaboration of an earlier work, and even if it is generally admitted that the last nine verses are not of the original.

By the time of the death of St. Peter and St. Paul (A. D. 64 or 65) the necessity for a written Gospel must have become very apparent. How some of those, to whom Peter and Paul and the other writers sent their epistles, became familiar with Christ's life and ministry through words of mouth, is told in Acts (as for example at XI. 19-21), to which book we would naturally turn for this information. The Epistles most certainly presuppose a thorough knowledge of the words and life of our Saviour, for His life is not given in the Epistles; His miracles (except the Resurrection) are never referred to; and His words are rarely quoted, and then not as they appear in the Gospels. It was therefore but natural as time went on that through Peter, who was with Christ in all His ministry, a book of the life and sayings of our Saviour should first come into existence, even if he were not its author; for oral traditions are decidedly unreliable in important matters.

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

St. Mark's Gospel makes no reference to the birth of Christ or John the Baptist, but begins with the latter's preaching. Its chronology is probably the most correct. It was written, as indeed were all the Gospels, in Greek, and is supposed to date from before the destruction of Jerusalem, which was in A. D. 70. It has always borne St. Mark's name. It would be beyond the scope of these pages to discuss at any length the theological side of this or the other Synoptic Gospels. I will only say that St. Mark's Gospel is the simplest in language of all four Gospels.

I now come to an extraordinarily interesting fact, which was discovered very early by students of the Gospels. If the reader of these pages will turn to a Harmony of the Gospels, and if he goes no further than the index of parallel matter, he will very soon notice that virtually all that is in St. Mark appears also in St. Matthew and St. Luke. Identity of language in individual sentences is very easily discovered. For example, in the account of the raising of Jairus's daughter, the multitude's opinion of Jesus, when He says the maid is asleep, not dead, is expressed in all three Gospels by the sentence: "They laughed Him to scorn." Similar

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

instances are the language of the sentence of the House Divided against itself, so well known to us Americans through Lincoln's use of it; the sentence in which is described how Simon was made to bear the cross; the verse describing the sending out of the Twelve.

In the story of Jairus's daughter, the whole incident is alike in the three Gospels, and in many other cases not only is the incident, but the language used in describing it, the same. Thus, the story of the Paralytic borne into Christ's presence by Four Men, the Parable of the Sower, the Three Questions of the Jewish Rulers, the Transfiguration, the Rich Young Ruler, the Discourse on the Destruction of Jerusalem, the Agony at Gethsemane, are astonishingly alike. As I have not space for all these passages I will quote but two from each Gospel; the first, a passage known to every communicant, reads thus:

ST. MATTHEW
xxvi. 26-30

ST. MARK
xiv. 22-26

ST. LUKE
xxii. 17-20

And as they were eat- And as they did eat, And he took the cup, ing, Jesus took bread Jesus took bread, and and gave thanks, and and blessed it, and brake blessed, and brake it, said, Take this, and it, and gave it to the dis- and gave to them, and divide it among your- ciples, and said, Take, said, Take, eat; this is selves; for I say unto eat; this is my body. my body. And he took you, I will not drink of And he took the cup, the cup, and when he the fruit of the vine, un- and gave thanks, and had given thanks, he til the kingdom of God

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

gave it to them, saying, gave it to them; and shall come. And he Drink ye all of it; for they all drank of it. took bread, and gave this is my blood of the And he said unto them, thanks, and brake it, new testament, which is This is my blood of the and gave unto them, shed for many for the new testament, which is saying, This is my body remission of sins. But shed for many. Verily I which is given for you: I say unto you, I will not say unto you, I will this do in remembrance drink henceforth of this drink no more of the of me. Likewise also fruit of the vine, until fruit of the vine, until the cup after supper, that day when I drink it that day that I drink it saying, This cup is the new with you in my new in the kingdom of new testament in my Father's kingdom. And God. And when they blood, which is shed for when they had sung a had sung a hymn, they you. hymn, they went out went out into the Mount into the mount of Olives. of Olives.

And then for a group of passages, more in the nature of a description of an event, there is the Transfiguration, which reads in the three Synoptic Gospels as follows:

ST. MATTHEW

XVII. 1-9

ST. MARK

IX. 2-9

ST. LUKE

IX. 28-36

And after six days And after six days And it came to pass Jesus taketh Peter, Jesus taketh with him about an eight days James, and John his Peter, and James, and after these sayings, He brother, and bringeth John, and leadeth them took Peter and John and them up into a high up into a high mountain James, and went up into mountain apart, and apart by themselves: a mountain to pray. was transfigured before and He was transfigured And as He prayed, the them: and His face did before them. And His fashion of His countenance: and His face did before them. And His fashion of His countenance was altered, and shine as the sun, and raiment became shining, exceeding white as His raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And hold, there talked with unto them Moses and And there appeared unto him two men, which Elias talking with Him. to them Elias with were Moses and Elias: Then answered Peter, Moses; and they were who appeared in glory, and said unto Jesus, talking with Jesus. And and spake of His decease

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

Lord, it is good for us, Peter answered and said which He should accom-
to be here: if Thou wilt, to Jesus, Master, it is plish at Jerusalem. But
let us make here three good for us to be here: Peter and they that
tabernacles, one for and let us make three were with him were
Thee, and one for Moses, tabernacles; one for heavy with sleep: and
and one for Elias, Thee, and one for Moses, when they were awake,
While he yet spake, be- and one for Elias. For they saw His glory, and
hold, a bright cloud he wist not what to say; the two men that stood
overshadowed them: for they were sore afraid. with Him. And it came
and behold a voice out And there was a cloud to pass, as they departed
of the cloud, which said, that overshadowed from Him, Peter said
This is my beloved Son, them; and a voice came unto Jesus, Master, it
in whom I am well out of the cloud, saying, is good for us to be here:
pleased; hear ye Him. This is my beloved Son: and let us make three
And when the disciples hear him. And suddenly
heard it, they fell on ly, when they had look-
their face, and were sore ed round about, they
afraid. And Jesus came saw no man any more,
and touched them, and save Jesus only with
said, Arise, and be not themselves. And as they
afraid. And when they came down from the
had lifted up their eyes, mountain, He charged they feared as they en-
they saw no man, save them that they should tered into the cloud.
Jesus only. And as they tell no man what things
came down from the they had seen, till the And there came a voice
mountain, Jesus Son of man were risen out of the cloud, saying,
charged them, saying, from the dead.
Tell the vision to no
man, until the Son of
man be risen again from
the dead.

In a few cases matter appears in St. Mark that is not in St. Matthew and St. Luke but there are very many passages where St. Matthew and St. Luke agree, and St. Mark is blank. Those Gospels in any event are much longer than St. Mark.

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

In a Bible of the usual small size, printed in two columns, the length of the Gospels is as follows: St. Matthew, 44½ pages (28 chapters); St. Mark, 28 pages (16 chapters); St. Luke, 48 pages (24 chapters), and St. John, 35 pages (21 chapters). St. Mark, it will be seen, is by far the shortest of all.

From the fact that the first and third Gospels contain virtually all of St. Mark, Bible students very early reached the conclusion that either there was an original, now disappeared, which served as a basis for all three Synoptic Gospels, or that one of these served as a basis for the other two. Today there is no question of the fact that St. Matthew and St. Luke are based on St. Mark. If, now, it is clear that St. Mark's Gospel underlies the first and third Gospels, a very interesting question arises as to the source from which St. Matthew and St. Luke derived the matter common to their two Gospels, and not found in St. Mark. This question I shall now discuss.

**St. Matthew's Collection of
The Sayings of Jesus**

Also Known as "Q"

IF the reader will turn again to a Harmony of the Gospels, he will find page after page on which only the first and third columns contain any printed matter, this matter being made up of passages common to St. Matthew and St. Luke and absent from St. Mark (and St. John as well.) Of these passages, the parable of the Lilies of the Field, the Story of the Centurion's Servant, the Sermon on the Mount, John the Baptist's Last Message, are so alike in the two Gospels as to immediately attract the reader's attention. In order to show how very marked this similarity is, I will quote a passage familiar to every one. In the middle of John the Baptist's Last Message, appears the following:

ST. MATTHEW

XI. 7-11

And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the

ST LUKE

VII. 24-28

And when the messengers of John were departed, He began to speak unto the people concerning John,

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

It should be further noted that St. Matthew and St. Luke are most similar in passages embodying Christ's own words, and as it is sure that St. Matthew and St. Luke are not copied one from the other, it is equally evident that the authors of these Gospels had before them a book containing in any event our Saviour's words. Papias again refers to just such a work by St. Matthew, who, he says, "composed the Logia in the Hebrew language," meaning by Logia the words of our Saviour.

The vast importance of a correct version of our Saviour's sayings must have been in the minds of many an early Christian, and it seems

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

but natural that steps should have been taken very early to preserve these words other than by oral tradition. St. Matthew can well have been the only one of the Apostles who knew how to write readily; he, it will be remembered, was a tax-officer. And nothing would be more natural than that he should from time to time write down the wonderful words that fell from our Saviour's lips. Unfortunately, this collection of sayings has not been itself preserved, but its one time existence students recognize. It was written in Aramaic—the language of Christ—and seems to have been early translated into Greek, which was the universal language of trade and culture East of Rome in those days. *Q*, as this work of St. Matthew's is often called (*Q* from the German “*Quelle*”—source, spring) is therefore another work embodied in the two Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, which thus appear to be made up of at least two originals, just as any history is based on works and manuscripts of others.

It has been suggested that even St. Mark may have had *Q* before him. Of course, such a thing is far from impossible, but it is entirely speculative, whereas the existence of *Q*, from which St.

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospels derived large portions of their version of Christ's words, is not doubted. It must not be expected that these words appear in exactly the same form in the two Gospels, but I shall have occasion to refer to this later. Again, it is a much discussed question as to which Evangelist reproduced *Q* most correctly; but this, again, is a discussion which does not lead to any very satisfactory result.

The Gospel according to St. Matthew

THE Gospel according to St. Matthew has always been placed at the beginning of the New Testament, and has always borne St. Matthew's name, although from the earliest days it was recognized that the Apostle was not its author. Who the author was, is not known, and there is the same uncertainty as to its date which attaches to the other Synoptic Gospels; but this uncertainty relates rather to the question of whether a Gospel was written before or after A. D. 70, the date of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. St. Matthew was probably written before that date, and in any event, after St. Mark was written, for as I have already pointed out, St. Matthew is primarily based upon St. Mark.

St. Mark's language is not given verbatim in St. Matthew (nor is it so given in St. Luke), for neither St. Matthew nor St. Luke quotes

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

St. Mark, just as neither quotes the passages from *Q*, which both reproduce. Rather is it that each rewrites both sources in his own particular style.

It requires but a very little reading in St. Matthew to show how totally different this Gospel is from St. Mark or St. Luke. Especially in the earlier part of the Gospel the constant reference by the Evangelist to the fulfillment of prophecies is noticeable and every one has been struck with the oft repeated phrase: “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by” such and such a prophet. This alone gives St. Matthew a character peculiar to itself.

There are a considerable number of passages in St. Matthew and St. Mark which are not in St. Luke, and while as between the two latter Gospels a similar condition of things exists, this peculiarity is more common as between St. Matthew and St. Mark. The story of the Syrophoenician Woman, with the pathetic appeal to Christ, “Yea, Lord, even the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs,” that of the Feeding of the Four Thousand, and the Discourse on Eating with Unwashed Hands, are all in St. Matthew and St. Mark, but not in St. Luke (or St.

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

John, for that matter). The similarity of the Story of the Feeding of the Four Thousand is so great that I think it will be interesting to give the two passages:

ST. MATTHEW
xv. 32-38

Then Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. And His disciples say unto Him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

ST. MARK
viii. 1-9

In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away.

Then, too, St. Matthew contains a number of familiar passages not to be found elsewhere,

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

of which the following are the best known: the Story of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt, the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. We shall find a similar condition of things in St. Luke and St. John, just as we have already noticed it in St. Mark. It would be useless to speculate on the origin of the many passages in one Gospel which do not appear in the others, for it is impossible to ascertain how the Evangelists proceeded to make use of the written sources and the oral traditions they may have had at hand.

Far more remarkable, as I have already pointed out, is the similarity of passages in St. Matthew and St. Luke containing sayings by our Saviour not found elsewhere, and of which *Q* is the supposed original. I have already spoken of the story of the Centurion's Servant, and commented at length on the last Message of John the Baptist. Both Gospels have the Sermon on the Mount, but St. Matthew's version is at least three times as long as St. Luke's. This particular passage has raised the very interesting question of how the Sermon was really given. It appears that most of what St. Luke has seemingly omitted is given by him elsewhere, scattered through his Gospel, and it has hence been urged that St.

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

Matthew put into the Sermon on the Mount sayings which fitted or appeared to fit in appropriately. But it seems to me that the matter could just as reasonably be argued the other way around, and while this may be an interesting discussion, it is not a very useful one. Both St. Matthew and St. Luke give Christ's genealogy, but while St. Matthew begins with Abraham, St. Luke begins with Christ and goes backward; the two genealogies are not at all the same. Both Evangelists tell the story of Christ's birth and again the story is differently given. These passages are not in the other two Gospels.

As St. Matthew's Gospel was written, it is believed, at Jerusalem, at all events in Palestine, students find in it strong Hebraic characteristics, wholly outside of the distinctive features to which I have referred. It is a much less poetic production than St. Luke, and is a rather dryer narrative than St. Mark.

The Gospel according to St. Luke

THE last of the Synoptic Gospels, that according to St. Luke, is the longest of all four of the Gospels. It is the one Gospel about whose authorship there has been the least discussion, for it has generally been admitted from the earliest days that Luke, who is referred to as "the beloved physician" in Colossians IV. 14, is the author of both this Gospel and of Acts. Both books are dedicated, as we would say today, to Theophilus, but who Theophilus was is not known.

The introduction to the Gospel states in so many words that others have undertaken to write of Christ's ministry, and as I have said, St. Luke based his Gospel primarily on St. Mark, using for his other matter, Q, among other works. St. Luke certainly must have had before him a considerable lot of matter, either unknown to the other Evangelists, including St.

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

John, or, if known to them, purposely omitted by them from their books. Thus, the birth of John the Baptist and all its attendant details, including Mary's remarkable visit to Elizabeth, and Zacharias' hymn, are not to be found elsewhere, although a very curious paraphrase of the birth of John is given in the New Testament Apocrypha, as applied to the birth of the Virgin Mary. The story of the Angels and the Shepherds, which every child loves; that of Christ arguing as a boy with the Elders; the story of the Good Samaritan; the Prodigal Son; the Penitent Thief at the Crucifixion—all these are told by St. Luke alone, and no part of them appears elsewhere.

Another matter worth referring to is this: that frequently discourses which appear in both St. Luke and St. Matthew do not occur in the same order or in connection with the same incidents. Thus, most of the contents of Chapter XI. to XVII., while in St. Matthew are not in that Gospel in any such connected form or at all in the same sequence. The terrible denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees is given in St. Luke as being made before Passion Week; in St. Matthew as during that week. I have already

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

referred to the difference between the two versions of the Sermon on the Mount.

It will be noticed that what St. Matthew and St. Luke derived from St. Mark is generally in the same order as given by St. Mark, but again St. Luke and St. Mark agree on passages which do not appear in the first Gospel. The most important of these is the Ascension, the omission of which by St. Matthew (and by St. John, as well) I repeat is hard to understand. And yet it is considered by some that this passage in St. Mark is not part of the original Gospel while stranger still, St. Luke, as an author, gives it twice—in his Gospel and again in Acts. This last fact has raised several hard problems for Bible students to ponder over, without, however, any solution being offered, as no reason can be advanced why St. Matthew and St. John should have omitted an event which is certainly suggested by both. (See St. Matthew, Chapter XXIV. and St. John, Chapters III. and VI.). It is as remarkable in its way as the absence of all allusion to Lazarus except in St. John's Gospel, and of all reference to St. Peter after the XIIth chapter of Acts.

I will quote a passage from St. Mark and St.

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

Luke, to show the similarity of language. Of the Miracles at Capernaum, the first read as follows:

ST. MARK
I. 21-34

And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day He entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him. And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and anon they tell Him of her. And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered

ST. LUKE
IV. 30-41

But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way, And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for His word was with power. And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this? For with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And the fame of Him went out into every place of the country round about. And He arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought Him for her. And He stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them. Now when the sun was setting, all

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

unto them. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And He rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that He was Christ.

It has been ably argued that certain passages in St. Luke's Gospel clearly indicate that it was not written until after the destruction of Jerusalem. I cannot pretend to pass upon such a question. Each Gospel is a history of the same general events, and the several authors were clearly men of strong individuality. While practically nothing is known of them, it is very evident that each wrote under different inspiration, as well as probably with different surroundings; each used a different style, and approached the subject, it would seem, from a different theological point of view. While this latter is not so readily noticeable to a layman with the Synoptic Gospels, it is very apparent if these are compared with the Gospel according to St. John.

The Gospel according to St. John

FROM the first verse of the Gospel of St. John it is very evident to even a casual reader, that he is beginning a book of a totally different character from the Synoptic Gospels. No doubt every one who reads the Gospels has pondered over the meaning of the words:

“In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and the
Word was God,”

a sentence exceedingly difficult for the ordinary mind to comprehend.

And as the reader progresses in this Gospel he finds more and more passages which introduce into the story of Christ's life and ministry an element of mysticism, as well as a manner of thought and expression, very far removed from the wonderful simplicity and clearness of His words, as given by the other Evangelists. Passages like the Dis-

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

course with Nicodemus (Ch. III.), the Samaritan Woman at the Well (Ch. IV.), and the Raising of Lazarus (Ch. XI.), contain references to Water and the Spirit, the Living Water, the Resurrection and the Life, while elsewhere we find symbolisms of the Bread of Life, of the Light of the World, of Water and Blood. The lessons drawn from the stories in this Gospel (parables there are few in St. John; allegories, however, are frequent), as well as the stories themselves, are as different in character as the language in which they are told is different from that of the other Evangelists. Compare the parable of the Sower and its lesson (Matthew XIII., Mark IV., Luke VIII.) with the parable of the Good Shepherd (John X.), and its lesson, and the difference in language and spirit is readily seen. Even more than that, there is a very great difference in the clearness of thought of the two, the former, to my mind, being much the clearer. Indeed, it soon becomes evident that we are reading in St. John a philosophical and theological treatise, not a mere story of our Lord as in the other Gospels.

One explanation of this difference between St. John and the other Gospels is, that St. John was written at a very much later date than the latest

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

Synoptic Gospel, that is, about twenty-five years after St. Luke. At that time—about 90 A. D.—the preaching of Christ had become an established religion, and was known not only in Asia, but in Greece and Rome. Its influence must have begun to be very great in the civilized world, and whatever they may have failed to say about it in their writings, the men of intelligence of those days must have realized that Christianity was an intellectual and moral force, superior to anything hitherto known, and that it was constantly increasing in spite of all opposition. To what extent men like Seneca, Pliny the Elder or Tacitus thought of the superiority of Christian over Roman morality, is not known; that they must have thought about it cannot be doubted.

With this growth and spread of Christianity necessarily arose discussions as to the meaning of Christ's words. It must be remembered that long before Jerusalem was destroyed serious disagreements had arisen even between Peter and Paul, and the latter had written a very severe rebuke of Peter's theology in the Epistle to the Galatians (Ch. II. v. 11, etc.) Now the Gospel according to St. John was written, not in Palestine, but in a Greek community—either Patmos or Ephesus—

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

and hence in a totally different atmosphere from the others. For if St. Mark was written at Rome, as some think, it was written in close association with St. Peter, and long before Christianity had begun to indulge in philosophical discussions of religion. And so this Gospel of St. John was written, I think, with the intent of giving an interpretation of Christ's words from a theologian philosopher's point of view, because such an interpretation then appeared necessary, and appealed to the author's followers, who were accustomed to philosophical discussion, unknown to Palestine. How the beloved disciple, a simple Galilean fisherman, came to develop a mentality so at variance with his early life, is not quite as astonishing to an American as it may be to a European, for we have too many examples of the rise of men of humble origin to dominating intellectual positions.

Much has been said about the authorship of this Gospel, but I am inclined to believe the Apostle John wrote it. It has been pointed out that John of all men would not have written about himself, the beloved disciple, as the author does; but Zebedee's children were certainly not lacking in self-appreciation, as appears from St. Matthew (Ch. XX.) and St. Mark (Ch. X.) The martyr-

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

dom of St. John, it must be admitted, appears, according to early traditions, to have taken place a considerable time before the Gospel is said to have been written, but this is a most difficult matter to settle as there are no specific statements of dates in any of the old books. To me the ending of this Gospel seems strange, for the reason that it is there taken for granted that people will be interested in the author, and it appears that even just after the Resurrection, there was a disagreement about John's fate. This interjection into the Gospel of the author's personality is entirely at variance with the spirit of the other three.

I have been obliged to go somewhat into the theological side of this Gospel as it is something which cannot well be avoided; but there are many other very marked differences between St. John and the other Evangelists. Like St. Mark, he begins with John the Baptist's mission, but unlike any of the others, he constantly goes into details in his stories with unusual, if not unnecessary care. This characteristic is so evident that it does not seem necessary to cite examples, but it suggests that John had personal knowledge of many facts, as well as a love of detail. At the same time, this detail, and an occasional diffu-

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

siveness—I will not call it verbosity—as in the case of the story of the Man Born Blind, indicate an entirely different order of mind in the author, from that of the other Evangelists. How these details were preserved so that a man of about ninety years of age could write them down, is not known.

St. John, it is generally believed, had in his hands the other three Gospels, and in a few instances, his language follows that of the other three fairly closely. The Feeding of the Five Thousand, for example, is very much the same in language in St. John and the Synoptic Gospels. In those Gospels, our Saviour's discourses as a rule are brief and concise; not so in St. John. Thus, what our Saviour said at the Last Supper takes up but a few verses in the other Gospels, but runs through all of four chapters and a part of a fifth in St. John. And yet he omits all reference to the institution of the Lord's Supper. Incidentally, these chapters seem to be in wrong sequence, if the words, "Arise, let us go hence," at the end of Chapter XIV. are in their right place. I do not like to think that St. John elaborated our Saviour's words, as historians of ancient days were wont to do with the orations

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

of men of whom they wrote, but while these very chapters are full of beautiful sentences, they contain others which are intricate and utterly lacking in the simplicity of our Saviour's discourses as given in the other Gospels.

The first twelve chapters of St. John contain a great deal of matter not in the other Gospels. Whence this matter is derived is, of course, quite unknown, and yet some of it is of singular importance. Chapter V., for example, contains the story of the Infirm Man at the Pool of Bethesda, of which no mention whatever is made elsewhere. The earliest miracle, that of turning water into wine, is told by St. John alone (Ch. II. 1-11), and while it is rather of minor importance, it is on this incident that is based to some extent the claim of the Virgin's power of intercession by the Roman Catholic Church. But why the Raising of Lazarus (Ch. XI.) is not mentioned by the other Evangelists is, as I have said, very remarkable, for not only is the miracle itself wonderful, but the whole story is full of beautiful sayings, and here alone is recorded the fact that our Saviour wept over His friend's death. On the other hand, it is equally incomprehensible that St. John fails to tell the story of

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

the Ascension at all, and it is strange that St. John, who seems to have been a man of the most lovable nature, should not have made mention of the Blessing of Little Children, or the Raising of Jairus's Daughter and its attendant incidents—to mention but two events.

There is one other matter which cannot be passed over, and that is, the difficulty of explaining the presence of so many sayings by our Lord which are not recorded by the other Evangelists. It is quite true that we have observed a not dissimilar situation as between St. Mark, on the one hand, and St. Matthew and St. Luke on the other. There is, however, a satisfactory explanation of this in the existence of *Q*. Furthermore, as we have seen, there is matter in St. Matthew not in St. Luke and vice versa, but this matter is not extensive as far as Christ's sayings are concerned. But with St. John, things are entirely different. Thus, the long Discourse on the Bread of Life (Ch. VI.), that on the Light of the World and on Spiritual Freedom (Ch. VIII.), that on the Good Shepherd (Ch. X.), contain nothing which can be found elsewhere. It is not difficult to understand that different authors should have omitted different matter or have given different

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

sayings in a slightly different manner, and have written in different styles. But it is, to me at least, inexplicable why St. John alone should have so many allegorical and mystical sayings of our Saviour (for all these passages are of this character) of which no trace is to be found in the other Gospels. It is quite impossible to believe that our Saviour talked in two different styles, and long before I began my present study, I used to think that the first three Gospels probably came nearer to our Saviour's own words than did St. John, and I think so all the more today. Nor have I ever been able to make out how the uneducated multitude, to whom our Saviour spoke most frequently, could have understood the meaning of many passages in St. John.

Much more could be said on the subject of this Gospel—but I have already said more than may be necessary. The cause of the many polemics over St. John appears to me to be that he frequently gave his version of our Saviour's words, not those words themselves, or added his elucidation of their meaning. Even if a layman feels sometimes like quoting St. John: “This is a hard saying, who can hear it?” there is no denying the beauty of St. John's rendering of many of our Saviour's words.

Conclusion

THESE four Gospels are the only ones which from the earliest days were recognized as being canonical, and if any one will take the trouble to look at the so-called Apocrypha of the New Testament, he will agree with the wisdom of those who established what is known as the Canon. For these apocryphal books have very little to commend them, and chapter after chapter are full of grotesque and fairy-like tales.

There does not appear to be any sure method of determining the exact chronology of our Saviour's ministry, but it must not be forgotten that the Gospels are the only existing genuine histories of His life, and that they are the only books, dating from a time reasonably near His ministry, in which His works and discourses are given.

There is one thing that has always impressed

THE GOSPELS—BY A LAYMAN

me, and that is, the simplicity of our Saviour's language, at all events in the first three Gospels. And yet consider how folios of disputes have been written on the meaning of what He said, and how men and women have suffered torture and been put to death, because they refused to accept some self-constituted human authority's interpretation of His sayings. "No man ever spake like this man," as is said in the Gospel of our Saviour, and no man's words have produced so marvelous a change in mankind. The few pages of the Gospels have had a greater influence on the world than all the rest of its literature put together.

I do not believe knowledge of what I have written above can affect a person's belief, except to strengthen it, and I fail to understand why the subject is never mentioned in church.

Note

The following books are among those in which the history of the Gospels is most conveniently to be studied:

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS, by Stevens & Burton.

A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT, by Peake.

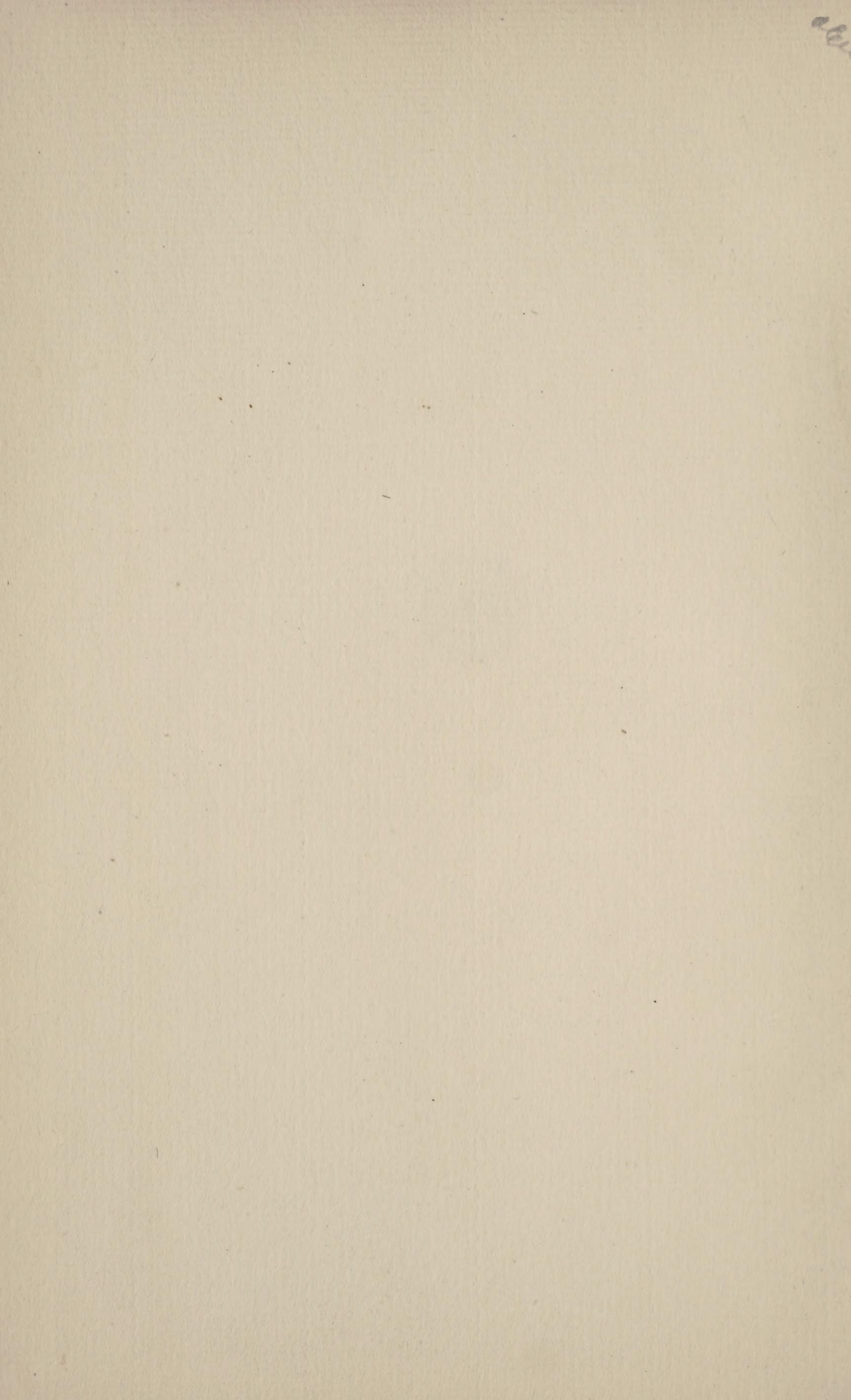
THE TEXT AND CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, by Souter.

THE MAKING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, by Bacon.

THE HISTORY OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE, by v. Soden.

Moffat's INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT is not as convenient for a layman as the others. It is too full of Latin and Greek.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 134 695 5

O